

# SML *Newsletter*



The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature

The Center for the Study of  
Midwestern Literature and Culture

Founded 1971

VOLUME SEVENTEEN

NUMBER ONE

Spring, 1987

Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature

Officers, 1987-1988

President:	Philip A. Greasley University of Fort Knox
Vice President:	Marilyn Atlas Ohio University
Executive Secretary/Treasurer:	David D. Anderson Michigan State University
Secretary:	Roger J. Bresnahan Michigan State University

Executive Council

Expires 1990:	Jean A. Laming Central Michigan University
	Parke Dixon Goist Case-Western Reserve University
Expires 1989:	Frederick C. Stern University of Illinois at Chicago
	Guy Szyberla University of Toledo
Expires 1988:	Pauline Adams Michigan State University
	Paul W. Miller Wittenberg University
Bibliographers:	Donald Pady Iowa State University
	Robert Beasecker Grand Valley State College

Society for the Study of  
Midwestern Literature  
Newsletter

Volume Seventeen Number One

Spring, 1987

Published at Michigan State University with the support of the Department of  
American Thought and Language.

Editorial Office:

Ernst Bessey Hall  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI 48824-1033

Editor:

David D. Anderson

Associate Editors:

Marilyn J. Atlas  
Roger Bresnahan

Editorial Assistant:

Valarie J. Kelly

Copyright 1987 by the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature.

Published in Spring, Summer, Fall.

Society for the Study of  
Midwestern Literature

Volume Seventeen, Number One

Spring, 1987

CONTENTS

The Seventeenth Annual Conference Citations:	1
Ray Lewis White	3
Andrew M. Greeley	4
Magical Realists in Midwestern Verse:	6
F. Richard Thomas, Lucia Fox Lockert	
Bernard F. Engel	
The Chicago Short Fiction of Sherwood Anderson and	12
Saul Bellow	
David D. Anderson	



## The Seventeenth Annual Conference

The Society's Seventeenth Annual Conference, with its concurrent symposium "The Cultural Heritage of the Midwest" and "Midwest Poetry Festival," was held at the Kellogg Center, Michigan State University, on May 14-16, 1987. More than 100 members participated, with approximately forty reading papers and 40 poets reading from their works.

At the Awards Dinner on Friday, May 15, Father Andrew M. Greeley was awarded the Mark Twain Award for his distinguished body of Chicago novels, and Dr. Ray Lewis White, Distinguished Professor of English at Illinois State, was awarded the MidAmerica Award for his distinguished contributions to the study of Midwestern literature.

At the annual convivium on Saturday, May 16, winners and runners-up were announced for the Midwestern Heritage Award for the best paper read and the Midwest Poetry Award for the best poem read. First prize for each was a \$250.00 cash award provided through the generosity of Gwendolyn Brooks, distinguished poet, honorary member of the Society, and recipient of the Mark Twain Award for 1985.

Winner of the Midwestern Heritage Award was Bruce Baker II of The University of Nebraska at Omaha for "Nebraska's Cultural Desert: Willa Cather's Early Short Stories."

Runners-up were Park Dixon Goiat of Case-Western Reserve University for "Sam Shepard's Child is Buried Somewhere in Illinois," Margaret D. Stuhr of Goldy Beacom College for "The Safe Middle West: Escape to and From Home," and Richard Sherikis of Sangamon State University for "William Maxwell's Lincoln,

Illinois." The essays will appear in MidAmerica.

The Midwest Poetry Award was presented to Sylvia Wheeler of the University of South Dakota for "The Whole Bible." Runners-up were Ann Carlson of the Michigan Poetry Society for "Virgin in the Street," Andrew Corrigan of Ann Arbor Huron High School for "The Woman Who Loved Her Skin," and Margo LaGattuta of Rochester, Michigan, for "Jesus at the Outlet."

The 1988 Conference will be held at the Kellogg Center, East Lansing, in May, 1988.

Citation of Ray Lewis White, Recipient  
of the MidAmerica Award for  
1987

Ray Lewis White is one of the most dedicated and devoted of Midwesterners: a convert. A native of the Western Virginia Highlands, the same countryside that Sherwood Anderson discovered and adopted in the mid-1920's, Ray graduated from Emory and Henry and then, while a graduate student at the University of Arkansas, he underwent an experience that can only be described in terms of that of Paul on the road to Tarsus; he discovered Sherwood Anderson. Like Paul, Ray became the true believer that he remains, producing his first book, The Achievement of Sherwood Anderson, in 1966. It was followed by - I think - six more on Anderson, including The Magnificent Re-Edited Memoirs, as well as dozens of critical, biographical, and bibliographic essays. But Ray has also branched out as a scholar should and must, including in his work books and essays on Gore Vidal, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, Ben Hecht, Scott Fitzgerald, William H. Gass, and perhaps a dozen others.

Ray became a Midwesterner in fact as well as spirit in 1968, when he became a member of the faculty at Illinois State, where he remains as Distinguished Professor of English. Now I am pleased to welcome him to a distinguished company that began with John T. Flanagan in 1971 as a recipient of the richly--deserved MidAmerica Award for 1987 for distinguished contributions to Midwestern Literature.

Ray, congratulations.

Dave Anderson



Citation of Father Andrew M. Greeley,  
Recipient of the Mark Twain Award  
for 1987

There are some people in the American experience who defy classification, who display facets so numerous and often so mutually contradictory that it's difficult to know what to call them: how do you define Edward Taylor? Jefferson? Mark Twain, except, perhaps, in their own self-images?

The man we're honoring tonight is such a man, self-defined in his recent autobiography as a parish priest (I'm tempted to add Some parish! Some priest!, so I will.)

Father Andrew Greeley is no transplanted or converted Midwesterner; like his illustrious predecessor, Ernest Hemingway, he was born in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1928; twenty-six years later he was ordained a priest, and in the regular scheme of things he became an assistant pastor in a Chicago church. But as with St. Paul, as with Ray White, something happened, and Father Greeley, became increasingly a pastor to literate Catholics in his sociological and religious writing and his professional work in the sociology of religion.

But Jonathan Edwards, worthy man, did not receive the 18th century equivalent of the Mark Twain Award. Not did Peter Cartwright or Charles Grandison Finney in the 19th, although the latter two may have contributed the substance of some of Twain's wit. In Father Greeley, conversely, a multitude of traditions, perhaps even a multitude of identities, converge, among them



certainly that of the church that has shaped the western word, the Irish tradition that has contributed wit and eloquence to our language and order to Chicato, and, in the tradition that has come to us from Mark Twain, the first, and, with apologies to Father Greeley, the greatest of Midwestern writers, the ability to define the Midwest, its cities and its people to those of other regions, other countries, perhaps even other times. And, again like Twain, Father Freeley explains, with clarity and grace, our times and ourselves to ourselves.

Father Greeley is committed to Church, to people, to the written word and the life of the mind and the imagination, unafraid to deal honestly and compassionately with the human problems of his generation and ours. He does so in the language and tradition founded by Mark Twain and followed by other recipients of the Mark Twain Award, and I'm pleased to present you, Father Greeley, the Mark Twain Award for 1987.

Dave Anderson

Magical Realists in Midwest Verse: F. Richard Thomas, Lucia Fox Lockert

Bernard F. Engel

"Magical realism," the vogue term for the practices of several contemporary Latin American novelists, can be applied without undue attenuation to the work of poets who remake, rather than report, their world. Two for whose work the term is appropriate are F. Richard Thomas and Lucinda Fox Lockert, both writing in Michigan. Thomas and Lockert present sophisticated selves who, perhaps because this is the Midwest, are, though aware of threat, by no means as desperate as, say, Saul Bellow's dangling man, John Updike's running Rabbit, or the neurasthenic Angelenos of Joan Didion and Robert Stone.

Two of Dick Thomas's recent offerings are "pre-publication" chapbooks produced by the English department of Odense University in 1986 while he was teaching his second stint in Denmark as a Fulbright professor. Poems from both booklets are to appear in the next hard-cover gathering Thomas issues.

The best pieces appear in Heart Climbing Stairs, which contains several examples of Thomas's accomplished skill at presenting a rueful, sometimes impassioned, sometimes disappointed, sometimes humorous speaker who is fond of wife and family but recalls old girl friends fondly, sweats at the sight of a neighbor woman undressing, recognizes his father in himself, and knows that ultimately each of us lives alone.

The 14-line "A Day Together" shows Thomas's ability to give the reality,

rather than the rhetoric, of married love as it tells how a couple go back to bed in the morning and, "after purr, sigh, / and small cry," after their bed-covered world has become the universe, find that

the perfumed dampness

between our chests

sucks our skins together

and "drift / into the listlessness / of love." This is not the love of the pop song or the sexologist, but it is the experience known to loving, long-married couples.

Such couples know a passion moderated--though not therefore febrile--by maturity of understanding. Thomas's man has his immoderate moments, however. The delightful "After Shower and Shave" shows him reduced to a comical animal dropping to the floor, heart hammering, knees and hands on fire, as he attempts to avoid being caught watching the woman next door he has seen disrobing in a window.

Exploitation of immoderate feeling is almost too fancy a term to give the humorous "Butter," whose speaker is a man so obsessed with his dairy fetish that he believes God "saw that it was good, like man, ribs, woman, holy water, and beer." The lubricated becomes more than merely lubricious; in his oleaginous rapture that man is, indeed, so absorbed in his butterine universe that he expects eventually to follow a "golden greased pathway to God/. . . fat and slithery / with piety."

The tour de force of "Butter" is almost matched by "Egg," wherein an



humble food again becomes a fetish and presiding spirit. The speaker finds that "Egg people glow on dark nights in the city," and a beaked presence taps its way into his consciousness to deliver a stream of "death-defying images: ovum, seed, and womb."

Only once in this brief collection does Thomas's speaker deal with someone other than himself. In a poem titled with the chemical formula for ethanol, and dedicated to the chemist Francis Taulelle, the speaker notes how Taulelle, a man interested in the "songs" of alcohol molecules under laboratory conditions, becomes at one with this music "in an etheareal psalm." It is this ability to merge, to imagine a self temporarily metamorphosed into another object, that is most notable among these pieces.

Thomas's man even empathizes with his piano, loving "the way it waits" for "what might be." Part of the appeal of such experiences is perhaps owing to the speaker's admission here that he lives his life alone: there is comfort and a version of comradeship in the butter and eggs and pianos that though categorized as non-human can in some unrecognized way share in our being.

This identification of self with the exterior is apparent also in the several poems of nostalgic remembrance that Thomas prints in this and the accompanying booklet Corolla, Stamen, and Style. Thomas, a professor of American Thought and Language at Michigan State, does not in these poems, nor in what I know of his other work, deal with the exterior world of the socio-political, philosophical, or religious. Perhaps he will turn to such



interests; perhaps, on the other hand, his work of the man who has problems but makes do represents a realm of experience more important than that of exteriors.

In Forms (Shamballa Publications, East Lansing, 1985), Lockert prints Spanish and English texts of her poems on facing pages. Necessarily giving primary attention to the English versions, I write what will be not so much a review--that is, a statement in which quality judgments are given--as a set of observations.

The English versions sometimes have alterations that puzzle--did Lockert change her mind after writing the first versions (which, I assume, have usually been done in Spanish)? Thus in "Hands" the word for "bones" in the fifth line becomes "holes" in the English; in "The Devourer" the Spanish for "his" in the third stanza becomes "wise" in the English version, and the word for "when" in the last stanza becomes "where" in the English. In "The Female Gaurdian," the Spanish for "victims" in the first stanza becomes "women's"; the ending of this poem makes more sense, and appears smoother, in the Spanish--the English drops the word "now" that to my taste improves the line. Occasionally a poem ends flatly, as when "Hands," after giving a balanced presentation of each hand's function--Lockert does not, for example, assign roles in line with the left brain, right brain division--ends not with image or metaphor but with the prosaic question "When do they move together / to catch the LIGHT?"

A native of Peru who is now a professor of romance languages at Michigan

State, Lockert is an assiduous writer with a long list of works in prose and verse to her credit; she publishes in both the U.S. and Latin America. Like Thomas, Lockert in Forms occasionally speaks in the guise of one who has merged with an object or creature ordinarily thought distinct from the human self. In "A Woman Called Horse," the speaker is, indeed, completely enquire in identity. She sees a threat, knowing that "they"--perhaps all those others who impinge on us--mean to be cruel. A glance in the fire shows her that better worlds can be imagined, yet the fire itself has been a destroyer. (The English version adds to the third stanza two explanatory lines not given in the Spanish and, to my taste, not needed). The woman-horse concludes that she is neither completely a victim, nor completely free, yet the possibility that she may bring surprises exists. The persistence of being in spite of apparent destruction is celebrated in "The Devourer," where a tiger that, beautiful himself, has eaten another animal and in absorbing it has become a "devourer angel" even, perhaps, more beautiful than the devourer himself.

Lockert is aware that, as her speaker says in "Flya's Immortal Movie," the poet or thinker must "change people into somebody else." An example is "The Lady of Orleans," giving a version, one might say, of Joan of Arc but envisioning her not literally but as a fully sexual, uncertain, and, astonishingly, forgiving woman.

Both Thomas and Lockert make occasional use of nostalgia. But with Thomas this generally implies recognition that as the past has been and gone, so the self that now has its day will soon enough be gone. For Lockert, nostalgia, usually arising from memory of Peru and other Latin settings, is

more often a vehicle for presentation or comment on the moral and socio-political realms. In "Outing," the 27-line narrative tells the horrifying story of the murder of three well to do sisters who are caught by a military patrol and burned till even their ashes have disappeared, a punishment meted out, one takes it, at the behest of Rejected Lover (who is, apparently, a member of the patrol). The setting is exotic to the Northamerican reader, but the action seems in line with what one reads of life in too many areas of our neighbor continent. The poem is the more horrifying because Lockert allows neither exclamation nor sentimentality to destroy its matter of fact presentation.

Social criticism can be almost equally appalling. In "The Merchant of Lima," a man who sells "spider webs" (perhaps trivia of any sort) on the sidewalk feels superior to the poor and the peddlers yet recognizes their plight sufficiently to feel discouraged by it. A city where the poorest can always find someone even poorer, Lima, the poem tells us, lives in the "absurd" myth that it is "The City of Kings": more apt, the speaker suggests, would be "City of Hungry Pelicans / and sorrowful men."

Lockert used Latin American myths and folk tales, and she write not only of Peru but also of Mexico, Caracas, and other southern settings. Sometimes she ventures into the terrain of the world-wide. In "Over-population" she builds on the fertile imagery of turtles to picture a world becoming filled with a multiplicity of creatures, "the fauna of kaleidoscope," with no one able or willing to control such famine-inducing growth.



Lockert is at her best, however, when she keeps her focus on the individual who becomes at one with his experience. In "The Dancer and the Rain" she conveys the delight of a William Carlos Williams character as she presents first the man Chilam's isolation--amid the crowd of dancers at what one supposes may be a folk festival he does not stand out: only Chilam himself, indeed, knows that he is dancing.. Yet when he leaps, "the petals of the clouds / perform acrobatics . . . ": earth and sky seem at one with him.

Lockert has, too, a deft touch with the brief, wry paradox that suggests more than its perhaps 12 to 20 syllables directly say, as when she notes in the first of "Mosaics: Number 25" that "When time had not yet been a color / that rose was already a rose."

The most magical realism of all would be development of a culture in the Midwest, and America generally, that would recognize the abilities of Thomas, Lockert, and other fine poets at work in this region today. If such a culture comes--what Vachel Lindsay in his noisy hopefulness envisioned as Athens on the prairie--such writers will have helped bring it about.

Michigan State University



The Chicago Short Fiction of Sherwood Anderson and Saul Bellow

David D. Anderson

Neither Sherwood Anderson and Saul Bellow was a native Chicagoan, yet each came to Chicago at a crucial and impressionable time in his life as part of one of the many great influxes of people that have made the city what it is. Anderson actually came three times: the first, from Clyde, Ohio, after his mother's death, in 1896, as one of the many young men and women from the farms and towns of the Midwest who were later to be memorialized in much of the fiction of Chicago early in this century. Anderson went to night school and worked in a cold-storage warehouse until rescued by the Spanish-American War. But he returned in 1900 to work in advertising, and again in 1913, a refugee from business success, to find himself and his craft in the Chicago Renaissance. The last, longest sojourn in Chicago was little more than six years, and he was to leave feeling that once again he -- or the city -- had failed him and his dream.

Bellow had come to Chicago twice, the first time from Montreal in 1924, at the age of nine, as Solomon Bellows, youngest and only Canadian - born of four children of Abraham Bellows, a Russian onion importer and Canadian bootlegger supplier. The family was part of that vast movement out of the ghettos and villages of central and eastern Europe into North America cities in the first decade of this century. The second time Bellow came to Chicago was after brief wartime service in the merchant marine, stints of teaching at the

University of Minnesota in 1946, in 1948-49, and again in 1954-59 and after two glorious years in Paris and Rome on a Guggenheim, 1948-1950, when he wrote much of The Adventure of Augie March, and intervening periods in the East -- in New York City, in Dutchess County, and at Princeton. Then, in 1963, he came back to Chicago to stay, explaining that "I thrive on a certain amount of smoke, gloom and cold stone," and later that "I grew up in Chicago; I got it into my bones."

In a much later time of introspection Bellow asks of his earliest most important Chicago residency, "What was it in the thirties, that drew an adolescent in Chicago to the writing of books? How did a young American of the depression period decide that he was, of all things, a literary artist?" Anderson, too, remembered in retrospect the wonder, the doubt, of the young man in the city: "Was there something hatching in me? With all my scribbling had I something to say? Were there tales I had picked up I might in the end tell truly and well?"

Both Bellow and Anderson have attempted to answer those questions, all of which might better have been left in rhetorical isolation or answered, as they have, the way in which a writer of fiction is best equipped to do so. Bellow's one brief published attempt is an essay, "Starting out in Chicago;" Anderson's several attempts lie in the volumes of memoirs, factual and fanciful, in which he tried to understand himself. Bellow concludes that at that time and in that place, "American society and S. Bellow came face to

face;" Anderson finally remembered allegorically,

...what an excited young man had once said to me in Chicago. We had stood together in Lake Street, that most noisy and terrible of all Chicago's downtown streets. "There are as many tales to be found here as in any street of any city in the world," he had said a little defiantly... But they will be different tales than would be found in any street of any of the old world cities." I wondered.

Each, of course, in trying to understand the relationship between the city, the fledging writer, and the work, was attempting to define in relatively objective terms that which can only be defined satisfactorily in the work that ensues. Bellow recalls the young man who, in 1937, jobless, reads Anderson Dreiser, Masters, and Lindsay, and writes at a bridge table in the back bedroom of his in-laws' apartment in Ravenswood; "...I had a discipline to learn at the bridge table in the bedroom."

Anderson too remembered his Chicago apprenticeship:

...I had taken rooms in Fifty-seventh Street... I would return to my rooms and sit at my desk and write. My life had become an absurdity. But perhaps I could bury myself in other, imagined lives. Words poured out of me. Often it did not work. The pencil dropped from my fingers and I sat at my desk, staring out at the window...

I turned to look at the pile of manuscripts on my desk. "Why am I doing this?" I asked myself. "I have so and so many hundreds of thousands of words, but why?" Nothing I had written seemed to have any life. Could I make my stories live?

Clearly when they sought to become writers in Chicago, Anderson and Bellow had little in common: Anderson a product of nineteenth-century Ohio villages, culminating in Clyde, Ohio, was of Wasp ancestry (an alleged Italian



grandmother was one of the many figments of his imaginative autobiography), of a nondescript Protestant background, educated in the village schools and, after his first Chicago experience and Spanish-American War service, a graduate, in 1900 in Springfield, Ohio, of Wittenberg Academy, an adjunct of the college that was to give him an honorary degree in 1927.

Bellow, conversely, was of Russian-Jewish ancestry, Canadian birth, an early boyhood spent in Lachine, Quebec, and a Montreal ghetto, and he came to Chicago's North Side. His parents were Orthodox Jews, but, as he revealed, "... the choice was between the Hebrew school and the pool room and the playground, and the pool room and the playground won out. Together with the public library," from which "I took home Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson. I didn't bring home the wisdom of Maimonides." He graduated from Tuley High School in 1933, attended the University of Chicago and graduated from Northwestern in 1937 with honors in sociology and anthropology. He began graduate school at Wisconsin but left because "every time I worked on my thesis, it turned out to be a story."

Clearly, the point at which the lives of Sherwood Anderson, to be dead in March, 1941, two months before Bellow published his first short story, and Saul Bellow converged, the place that they held in common, the place where they served their literary apprenticeships and where each learned that he could be a writer, was Chicago. There, between late 1900 and late 1906, Anderson wrote advertising for the Long-Critchfield Agency and wrote articles that increasingly became fictional sketches for Agricultural Advertising. And



there, after departure, business success, marriage, and the birth of three children, he returned in early 1913. While writing advertising for Taylor-Critchfield and becoming an eminence gris - he was approaching 36 -- he published his first short story, "The Rabbit-pen," in Harper's in July 1914.

Bellow, married in December, 1937, followed a depression-era pattern: first he worked on the Illinois WPA Writers Project writing brief biographies of the writers he hoped to join; then, while teaching at Pestalozzi -- Froebel Teachers College in Chicago, in Partisan Review of May-June 1941 he published his first short story, "Two Morning Monologues."

The stories, twenty-seven years apart in time, have four things in common: their imperfections, their lack of true significance, and their use, incidentally rather than importantly, of Chicago as background and setting. Of most importance, however, each foreshadows the better, even the great work that was to come.

"The Rabbit-pen" is set in a suburban Chicago summer house, a downtown office, and a fashionable restaurant, but except in moments, it might have been set almost anywhere. In it Anderson fuzes three elements: the struggle of a mother rabbit to save her newly born offspring from the rampaging male, a realistic incident that becomes symbolic, with the romantic fantasies of a successful writer concerning marriage, and with the competition between a wealthy Chicago mother and a German housekeeper for the love of the woman's children. It has overtones of the exotic, and it depends upon a twisted

ending for the effect that it has: the writer is shocked to learn that the German housekeeper, whose confidence and strength he had admired, and to whom he had fantasized marriage, had married the German gardener and returned to Germany. With her departure, the friend's children, as the friend tells the writer in bewilderment, have become unmanageable.

In the story conversations are strained and unreal, and the central character, the writer of two successfully novels, is naive beyond belief. Only the incident of the rabbit-pen foreshadows Anderson's later use of vivid, harsh incidents in his short fiction, but in the story it is almost incidental. The portrait of the housekeeper foreshadows Anderson's later idealized portraits of his mother, and there are clear indications of his later important concern with human love and the ironies of appearance. But the story is weak, its point lost in unreal complexities.

But in the background there are undertones of a reality that is clearly Chicago: "the snow lying piled along the edges of the city streets;" the lake in the distance, "blue and cold and lonely," evidences of the image and atmosphere Chicagoan would give to other stories he would write, even as he determined to put Chicago behind him.

While "the Rabbit-pen" loses its significance in complexities beyond anything Anderson would attempt in the future in his short fiction, Bellow's "Two Morning Monologues" is simpler and slighter than any of his succeeding short fictions. It consists of two brief sketches, the monologues of the title. In the first, at 9:00 A.M., a young man, out of work and out of

school, ponders the pointlessness of his days as he fills them, out of the house, away from the father who insists that he get a job, any job until he can find an opening and teach. In the background are the city, beginning to stir again after the long somnambulance of the depression, and the peacetime draft that may ultimately free him from his morning monologues and his idle days, that are punctuated only by the question: "What'll it be today, the library? museum? the courthouse? a convention?"

The second monologue, at 11:30 A.M., is that of a gambler who walks on the edge, waiting, without faith in either a system or in chance, confident that somehow he'll make it, certain that he won't, anticipating not the forced experiences that fill empty days but the momentary despair of losing," when you hear...the swishing in the heart like a deck rifted, and the stains grow under the arm."

Each of the monologists is caught between realities; the young man in the first is neither of the working world nor excluded from it by anything other than chance, and the gambler in the second is caught in the long interval between having placed his bet and the result of the race. In each case the protagonist--or more properly the monologist--is faced with the prospect of filling time--day by day, into an unknown future, or each day into a future of endless risk.

Of the two monologues, the former is that which was to contribute substance to Bellow's first novel, Dangling Man (1944), in which the protagonist, no longer part of the civilian world, not yet a soldier, fills



the days with speculation, pondering, brooding, until he rescues himself by volunteering for induction. In both of the monologues the protagonist, as he dangles between realities past and future, provide the pattern for most of Bellow's succeeding novels including the recent The Dean's December, as his protagonists, temporarily suspended between realities, cities, polarities, or experiences, ruminate, brood, ponder, on meanings that elude them and fulfillment that remains beyond their grasp.

The first monologue, like the novel that it inspired, is clearly set in Chicago as the young man, his fifty cents allowance in his pocket, sets forth on the Cottage Grove car through the seasonal colors of sand and gray, often reading as it turns down Wabash to the Loop and another day to be spent. But the gambler's reality is not Chicago; it is the grim interior grayness of a cheap rooming house that might be anywhere.

This story, like Anderson's "The Rabbit-pen," is significant for what it prefaces and presages; like Anderson's, its real importance is the later accomplishment of its writer. Although both Anderson and Bellow collected their later stories regularly, neither saw fit to reprint their first. Anderson later wrote of the occasion that led to his writing "The Rabbit-pen" in his Memoirs and talked on several occasions about the impact of his first fiction publication, but Bellow has remained publicly silent about his. Anderson's has been reprinted once and will appear soon in a collection of all of Anderson's short fiction; Bellow's was reprinted in Partisan Reader (1946).

Chicago had given both new young writers a place in which to begin to

write and a place in which they might locate their people in space and time, but Anderson's relationship with Chicago, the place in which the young men of his first two novels sought and lost the success that the new century promised, was to be short-lived; and his first major success, Winesburg, Ohio (1919) is a collection of related stories set in a time and place drawn from his memories of the Clyde, Ohio, of his late nineteenth-century youth.

Yet, even as he determined to bring the people of Winesburg into the modern world in Poor White, he returned again and again to Chicago in short fictions. But they were neither stories of adult success marred by frustration, as was "The Rabbit-pen," nor were they stories of the young man's encounter with the city. Instead, they reflect a profound disillusionment with the city, its values, and what he had begun to believe was the lack of direction and substance in a Chicago literary and intellectual movement that had become fraudulent. Thus, "The Triumph of a Modern, (New Republic, 31 January 1923) portrays the shallow, confused values of liberation; "A Chicago Hamlet" ("Broken" Century, March 1923) tells the story of a young man's frustration and his conviction that "It is horrible stuff, this whiskey, eh but after all this is a horrible town;" "Milk Bottles" ("Why There Must be a Midwestern Literature," Vanity Fair, March 1921) portrays the failure of a young advertising writer who begins to believe what he writes until a young actress tells him that "we live such damned lives...and we work in such a town;" "The Sad Horn Blowers" (Harper's, February 1922) describes the lot of a young man from a small town condemned to drilling meaningless holes in meaningless pieces of metal and occasionally blowing a old man's cornet in

meaningless protest. Finally, in "A Man's Story" (Dial, September 1923), Anderson writes of an older man who escapes to Chicago with the woman he loves, but she is murdered, and he is alone, once more sinking, as Anderson comments, into the sea of doubt. With this story, and with the novel Dark Laughter (1925) and his earlier departure from advertising, Anderson's relationship with Chicago ended in a bitterness unpredictable in a man for whom the Chicago liberation had once meant so much in his life and in his art as it made him a writer.

Bellow, conversely, has maintained a love-hate relationship with Chicago in his life as well as his work, and the list of his short fictions as well as his novels, about half of each of which are set in Chicago, reflect that attitude. The city increasingly becomes creator and molder as well as urban reality, as his people make their way through a world that borders on caricature and ultimately threatens nightmare. Thus, "An Address by Gooley MacDowell to the Hasbeens Club of Chicago" (Hudson Review, September 1951) is a grotesque spoof and "Looking For Mr. Green" (Commentary, March 1951) has the protagonist searching futilely for a man for whom he has a relief check; the threatening decay of the South Side black district is surpassed only by the stone wall of feigned ignorance, yet the young man perseveres; after all, Green may exist; he might even be found. In Bellow's most recent collection, Him With His Food In His Mouth (1984), "Zetland: By a Character Witness" (Modern Occasions) returns to the Chicago of his boyhood, molder of street kids, precociousness, and a curious artistic drive; Zetland is



his friend Isaac Rosenfeld, product of "straight-ruled Chicago," a promising writer dead in his young manhood; "A Silver Dish" (The New Yorker) is the story of Woody, a South Side businessman of sixty as he comes to terms with his father's determined life and defiant death and his own mortality. "Cousins" deals with the complexities of relationships stemming from Jewish immigrant closeness and assimilated dispersion and with the curious dichotomy between "Tanky" Raphael Metzger, flashy gentleman hustler, and Scholem Tansky, philosopher and retired cab driver, as observed by their cousin, a conscious-stricken, time-stricken, past-ridden lawyer.

Each of these Chicago stories is set in the Chicago of Bellow's youth and young manhood, the Chicago of memory, even -- Bellow would hate me for saying this -- of nostalgia as he recognizes the good and evil of a city and a time that were at once human and humane, a city damaged beyond repair by the passage of time and people, one people dispersed beyond recall except in memory and another, as The Dean's December makes clear, hopelessly in its place. But Bellow's most recent Chicago story, "What Kind of Day Did You Have?" (Vanity Fair, February, 1984) is contemporary suburban Chicago, the boredom of a housewife, the attraction -- and the demands -- of an elderly worldclass intellectual and a day spent largely in a motel room near Detroit Metro; is Bellow poking fun at what a city and a people and their values have become.

For Anderson and Bellow, Chicago provided both a place to learn to write and a place where they tested the reality of their early work, providing both the impetus and the foundation of their literary apprenticeship, as each

learned to handle in their work the places and the people that they knew best. For Anderson, that meant a return in his art to the people and places of small-town Ohio in his youth, just as by 1925 he had found a new place for himself in rural and smalltown western and mountain Virginia.

Just as it was perhaps inevitable that Anderson would reject Chicago as both a literary and a personal place and search out a usable past, it was just as inevitable that Bellow would return to Chicago, both that of his youth and that of a frightening present, in his life as well as in much of his work. And Bellow continues to explore the dimensions of both -- most recently in an essay in Life (October 1986) in which he made clear his fascination with and affection and concern for a city that, he insists, more nearly reflects for better and and worse the American experience in the twentieth century than any other.

Michigan State University